

# A CANOPIC JAR OF KING NESU-BA-NEB-DĒDET OF TANIS

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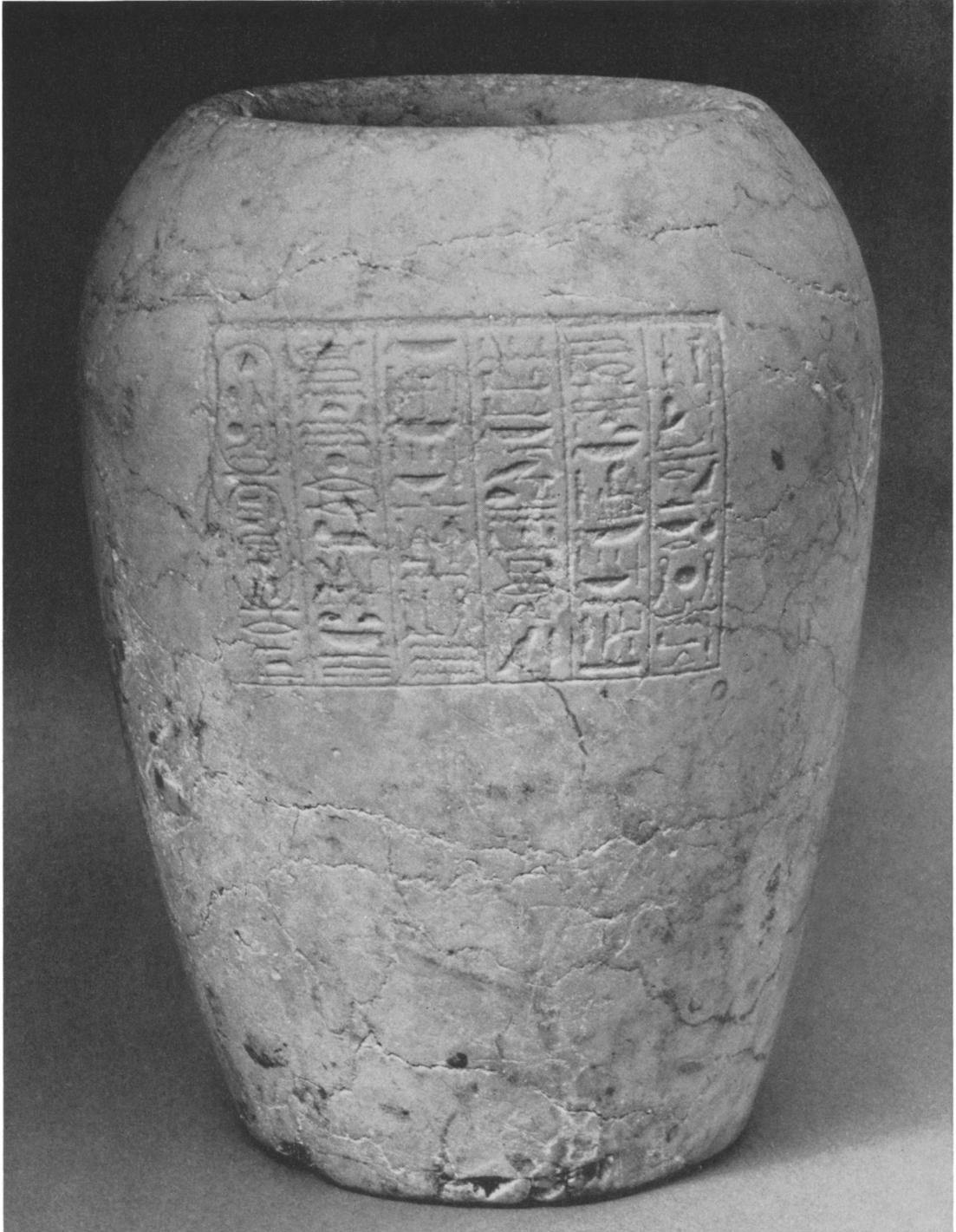
“Let thy scribe be brought to me that I may send him to Nesu-Ba-neb-Dēdet and Tenet-Amūn, the rulers whom Amūn has given to the north of his land, and they will send all (that is needed).”

When Wen-Amūn, the Theban, spoke these words he was in an extremely awkward, humiliating, and exasperating predicament. Sent to Syria by the High Priest of Amūn, Hri-Hor, to procure timbers for repairing the sacred bark of the god, he had arrived at Byblos without credentials and without funds. Up to this point his attempts to coax or bluff the local prince, a hard-bitten Phoenician named Zakar Baʿal, into complying with his demands had been singularly unsuccessful. Now, however, matters took a decided turn for the better. Nesu-Ba-neb-Dēdet, the Tanite founder of the Twenty-first Egyptian Dynasty, was well known in Byblos, and at the moment a score of merchant ships employed by him were lying in its harbor. A messenger was therefore dispatched to Tanis, the royal residence in the northeast Delta, accompanied by an advance shipment of seven large timbers. When, forty-eight days later, a ship arrived from Egypt with the down payment demanded by Zakar Baʿal, the latter promptly sent a gang to the Lebanon to fell the necessary additional number of trees. These events, described in a report drawn up by Wen-Amūn upon his return to Thebes and preserved to us in a papyrus now in Moscow, are presumed to have taken place about 1085 B.C., five or six years after the disappearance from the historical scene of Ramesses XI, the last king of the Twentieth Dynasty. In them we see reflected the low estate to which Thebes, formerly the capital of a vast empire, had fallen during the latter years of the New Kingdom. Clearly, what little power Egypt still possessed was now centered in the Delta, never again to

be regained by the once great metropolis of the south.

Some years later we hear again of King Nesu-Ba-neb-Dēdet, this time in an inscription which he caused to be carved in the limestone quarry at ed Dibābīyeh, on the east side of the Nile, seventeen miles south of Thebes. Once more we find him devoting his resources to the benefit of the domain of Amūn, ignoring completely the vaunted authority of the contemporary priest king of Thebes, whom he must have justly regarded as his vassal. A high Nile had breached the stone revetment of the river bank below the temple of Amūn at Luxor and flooded the pavement of the great shrine. Informed of the damage while in residence at Memphis, Nesu-Ba-neb-Dēdet dispatched his master builders and a gang of three thousand workmen with instructions to proceed post-haste to the quarries opposite Gebelein, cut the necessary blocks, and effect immediate repairs on the river wall. A sentence near the end of the inscription suggests that the pharaoh in person went south to inspect the completed work.

Under the name Smendes, the abridged Greek version of “Nesu-Ba-neb-Dēdet,” the king is listed in the redactions of Manetho’s history as the founder of the Twenty-first Dynasty and assigned a reign of twenty-six years. His throne name, Hedj-kheper-Rē<sup>c</sup> Sotep-en-Rē<sup>c</sup>, and his personal name, Nesu-Ba-en-Dēd(et) (*sic*) Mery-Amūn, appear on a lapis-lazuli bead, formerly in the MacGregor collection. That he and his queen, Tenet-Amūn, made their capital at Tanis is clearly indicated in the report of Wen-Amūn, who stopped there en route to Syria to deliver to them his letters of introduction and receive from them his passage north on a Phoenician ship. It has been conjectured with great probability that Nesu-Ba-neb-Dēdet



*Canopic jar of alabaster, bearing the names and titles of King Nesu-Ba-neb-Dēdet (1080-1054 B.C. of the Twenty-first Dynasty. Rogers Fund, 1947. Height 11½ inches (29 cm.)*

was a high-ranking Tanite official—perhaps the northern vizier—who served under Ramesses XI and whose wife, Tenet-Amūn, may have been a princess of the blood royal. Control of the Delta probably passed into his hands in 1085 B.C., the nineteenth year of the reign of Ramesses XI. His assumption of the pharaonic titles may be placed a few years later, say 1080 B.C., and the end of his reign in 1054 B.C., when the throne passed to his successor, King Pa-sib-kha<sup>c</sup>-en-nūt (Psousennes) I.

The foregoing is the sum total of our present knowledge of this key figure in Egyptian history. Although excavations at Ṣān el Ḥagar, the site of ancient Tanis, have uncovered the intact burials of four of his successors of the Twenty-first and Twenty-second Dynasties, the tomb of Nesu-Ba-neb-Dēdet himself has remained unknown, and monuments bearing his name are still of the utmost rarity. It is therefore of interest to record the recent addition to the Museum's collection of an inscribed object of this pharaoh which was acquired by its previous owner at a village near Ṣān el Ḥagar and which is without question from the tomb of the king at Tanis.

As can be seen from the accompanying illustration, the object is an alabaster jar of the traditional type designed to contain the viscera removed from a mummified body and generally, if somewhat misguidedly, called a "canopic jar." The jar is a rather large and well made example of its type, though the stone, a coarse calcite, is not of the best quality and the surface finish is a trifle dull. It is probably one of a set of four or more from the royal tomb and very likely at one time was provided with a stopper in the form of the falcon head of the funerary god Ḳebeḥ-snēw'ef.

Six columns of hieroglyphic inscription, neatly engraved on the side of the vessel, contain the names and titles of the king, preceded by a formula of unusual type addressed to Ḳebeḥ-snēw'ef. "Ḳebeḥ-snēw'ef," we read, "mayest thou be caused to flourish forever and not be turned back at the entrance of thy road.

Mayest thou enrich those who are in thee through food of thy giving. May they be abundantly endowed through that which goes forth from thee. Mayest thou nourish thy brothers. May there be no cessation of the stream which goes forth from the primeval waters to the Osiris, the King of Upper and Lower Egypt, the Lord of the Two Lands, Hedj-kheper-Rē<sup>c</sup>, Chosen of Rē<sup>c</sup>, Nesu-Ba-Dēd(et), Beloved of Amūn, forever."

Although the appearance of this jar on the antiquities market diminishes the hope of finding the tomb of King Nesu-Ba-neb-Dēdet intact, we are now assured of its existence near the ancient royal residence at Tanis and may look forward to additional inscribed monuments of this pharaoh becoming available to students of Egyptian history.

*The jar, purchased in April, 1947, bears the accession number 47.60.*

*The Report of Wen-Amūn has been translated and discussed by Breasted, Ancient Records, iv, §§ 557-591, and, more recently, by Olmstead, History of Palestine and Syria, pp. 288-292. The quarry inscription at Dibābiyeh may also be found, with references, in Ancient Records, iv, §§ 627-630. The monuments of Nesu-Ba-neb-Dēdet and Tenet-Amūn are listed in Gauthier, Livre des rois, iii, pp. 287, 288, and in Petrie, History, iii, pp. 220, 221. Excellent discussions of the late Twentieth Dynasty and early Twenty-first Dynasty are contained in the second edition of Drioton and Vandier, L'Égypte ("Clio": Introduction aux études historiques); in Meyer, Göttesstaat, Militärherrschaft und Standewesen in Ägypten; and in Kees, Herihor und die Aufrichtung des thebanischen Göttesstaates. On Tanis and the important excavations conducted there by the expedition of the University of Strasbourg the reader is referred to the numerous books and articles by Pierre Montet, the director of the expedition: Les Nouvelles Fouilles de Tanis; Le Drame d'Avaris; "La Nécropole des rois tanites," Kêmi, ix (1942), pp. 1-96; etc.*